

Testimony for DMHAS Budget Hearing

Good afternoon to the Appropriations Committee and my fellow advocates and guests of the DMHAS Budget Hearing.

Hello, my name is Kevin Leniart. I'm from the Second Wind Clubhouse in Enfield, CT. I'm also an Advocacy Unlimited advocate who would also like to thank the Keep the Promise Coalition for their help and support.

There is not just one factor which promotes recovery for people with psychiatric disabilities. There are quite a few of them. I will just scratch the surface and talk about some of the factors that comprise recovery.

Access to medications is a good place to start. The meds provide a sense of stability which for me helps to organize my thoughts and get good rest. Without meds, my life would be chaotic and disorganized.

Psychosocial clubhouses promote rehabilitation and community integration. Activities for an average day and structure are another integral part of recovery. People like me need a place to work, find recreation, and regain confidence and skills to get our lives together.

A third factor is available hospital beds. For me, the road to recovery started in 1992 after a brief stay at Cedarcrest Hospital in Newington, CT.

It was a very difficult time in my life as I was extremely withdrawn and very paranoid. But, I knew that I could trust the people at Cedarcrest.

One of the case workers there went with me to apply for SSDI benefits. That was a process which made my life considerably more manageable with a financial comfort that allowed me to progress slowly through the mental health system.

At the time, I wasn't very appreciative and simply didn't want to be in the hospital. But it was a place that I needed to be. I can testify that the system works and would sincerely recommend that the members of the Appropriations Committee re-examine the closing of Cedarcrest Hospital.

Places like Cedarcrest Hospital save our lives and the people that work there provide a cornerstone of recovery from psychiatric disabilities. Money for meds, clubhouses, and Cedarcrest are a few of the keys to recovery for people like me.

Please reconsider and revisit cuts to the state mental health services. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you. Thank you.